

# Translation (A poem)

Post by "Don" of July 29, 2021 at 9:22 AM

At the risk of unveiling a rough draft, here's the first run at a poem I've been working on to get at the usefulness but inadequacies of translation.

Frank criticism welcomed! (Talking to you [Joshua](#) 😊 )

A translation makes us

Believe we can

Comprehend a language

Distant in time,

Evocative, nuanced,

Foreign, strange, new.

Giving us words to read

Holds before us

Imperfect reflections.

Just consider,

Kings and peasants would speak

Living Latin.

Melodic Greeks sang, but,

Now, we must trust

One translator's choices.

Pursue connotations!

Question their decisions!

Read carefully!

Sense something deeper and.

Treasures await!  
Uncover mosaics,  
Varied colors  
Waiting discovery like  
Xenos: stranger.  
Yet also visitor.  
Zeroing in  
Yields riches unforeseen.  
Xenos: serve guests  
With hospitality.  
Vow to dig in!  
Upset preconceptions,  
Tempted to start  
Seeing complexities.  
Read beneath lines,  
Questioning the choices  
Presented there.  
One word fixed on the page  
Now expanding its sense  
Makes you appreciate  
Language becoming yours.  
Keep comparing translations,  
Juxtapose and compare.  
Increasing understanding.  
Hold decisions in check.

Good enough is not sufficient.

Flowing words fill us

Evoking

Delight,

Comprehend

Beyond

A translation.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of July 30, 2021 at 6:55 PM**

Looks like our resident post [Joshua](#) must be taking a sabbatical!

I think we fixed the login problems so I doubt it's that....

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### **Post by “Don” of July 30, 2021 at 7:15 PM**

Oh, no worries! I'll just be interested in a review if he gets a chance. He was very helpful on the hymn! 😊

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### **Post by “Joshua” of July 31, 2021 at 10:09 PM**

Quote

Looks like our resident poet JJElbert must be taking a sabbatical!

Don't go putting all my stuff in the yard just yet 😁

Don, I see you're getting well-acquainted with the particular difficulties of short lines! Let me sit with it a bit, I'll try to circle back.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2021 at 10:10 PM**

The prodigal surveyor has returned just as we were talking a lot about boundary-stones. We will halt the eviction proceedings!

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### **Post by "Don" of July 31, 2021 at 10:58 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

The prodigal surveyor has returned just as we were talking a lot about boundary-stones. We will halt the eviction proceedings!

Remember, prodigal means "spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant." That doesn't sound like our friend, [Joshua](#) ... And what are doing, using Biblical allusions anyway, [Cassius](#) 😊

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### **Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2021 at 11:01 PM**

Well whenever I think about "evicting" someone I think about the Biblicists I'd like to evict from "our" homeland of Italy and Greece, so I guess that's why I associate the terms together 😊

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### **Post by "Don" of July 31, 2021 at 11:26 PM**

#### [Quote from JJElbert](#)

Don, I see you're getting well-acquainted with the particular difficulties of short lines!

You bet!! 😊

I still think the topic of the poem has merit, but I'm wondering if I need another structure... although I liked the abcedarian approach for the language aspect.

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### **Post by “Joshua” of August 5, 2021 at 2:33 AM**

Quote

I still think the topic of the poem has merit, but I'm wondering if I need another structure...

Well, I can offer my...erm...tongue-in-cheek submission ☐☐

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#### ***Note; on the Translator***

Good friend beware  
this slack apparel;  
It once wore well  
But no more does;  
The wine is old,  
But not the bottle-  
T'will serve, but is  
Not what it was.  
There's use within  
A cooper's barrel,  
But beauty more

In ash and oak-  
The poet's verse  
Was fine and subtle—  
The translator's  
Is rancid yolk!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 5, 2021 at 4:35 AM**

If that is original composed for the occasion that shows quite a talent!

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### **Post by “Don” of August 5, 2021 at 7:31 AM**

*Paian Anax! That is impressive!*

It seems I serve better as a Calliope to [Joshua](#) 's Lucretius than a poet myself 😊

My only observation is that last word "yolk". You paint such a vivid picture with the barrels and wine that to end on an egg seems out of place. I was thinking the near rhyme "sack" but I don't think it's near enough. Oaks and Hoax?

...

In ash and oaks.

The poet's verse

Was fine and subtle—

The translator's,

A rancid hoax.

Joke?

The translator's,

a rancid joke?

Switch "oak and ash" then

The poet's verse

Was fine and subtle—

The translator

Makes sour mash.

Just suggestions. You are sincerely an inspiration!!

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### **Post by “Joshua” of August 5, 2021 at 9:05 AM**

You're spot on Don, the last line gave me by far the greatest struggle.

My original wording was:

*The poet's verse*

*Was fine and subtle—*

*The translator's,*

*A f\*\*\*ing joke!*

I then switched "ash and oak" and rhymed it 'trash'...

I'll keep 'tinkering', as you like to say 😊

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### **Post by “Don” of August 5, 2021 at 10:06 AM**

That's the issue I'm running into to convey.

Translation can be a very useful tool but it can also be a mask or facade or pale distorted reflection.

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**Post by “Joshua” of August 5, 2021 at 12:00 PM**

Try this on for size;

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*There's use within*

*A cooper's barrel,*

*But beauty more*

*In oak and ash—*

*The poet's verse*

*Was fine and subtle—*

*Translated in*

*A leaking cask.*

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**Post by “Don” of August 5, 2021 at 2:11 PM**

Nice! Well done!

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**Post by “Don” of August 5, 2021 at 8:44 PM**

[Quote from JJElbert](#)

Try this on for size;

\*\*\*

*There's use within*

*A cooper's barrel,*

*But beauty more*

*In oak and ash—*

*The poet's verse*

*Was fine and subtle—*

*Translated in*

*A leaking cask.*

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I really like than near rhyme which, to me, approximates the "almost but not quite" relation of the translation to its original source.